

# Engineers Lend a Hand



Story by  
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Outside the gates of Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, engineers are helping make the lives of the people of Kosovo better by making travel safer for them and multinational forces that travel throughout the province.

Missions conducted outside of Camp Bondsteel are done for several reasons. Making roads safe for use by Kosovo Forces is one reason. Connecting towns with less treacherous roads is another reason that improves the quality of life for the people of Kosovo.

One success that adds to the quality of life of the people was the completion of an improved road project in the village of Kololec, Kosovo.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Europe District lent their technical expertise to the Kololec road project and worked alongside Task Force Falcon engineers, TMK (Kosovo Protection Corps), C Company, 206th Engineer Battalion, Mercy Corps and the different municipalities, said Maj. Dean Ervin, task force engineer, Multinational Brigade (East). Some of the improvements and

repairs were done to the road's drainage system, grade and surface.

Kololec is in a low-lying area, so when it rained the potholes would fill with water and the road would flood. New drainage ditches were dug because flood waters had nowhere to go. Once the road's surface was fixed and the drainage ditches were dug the water no longer collected the same way, said Ervin.

When the team first came to town the villagers were apprehensive about the project and stood back watching, said Ervin.

"We started working, and pretty soon the whole village was out there helping," he said.

"People started coming out and doing things for themselves once they realized they could," said Staff Sgt. Rayford Cerny, task force engineer, Multinational Brigade (East).

The villagers' apprehensiveness was

due, in part, to the presence of TMK because Kololec is a Serbian village and the TMK is predominately made up of Albanians. This uneasiness stems from one of the many relationship intricacies in this region of the world.

To the Serbians, TMK represented the Kosovo Liberation Army, which purportedly emerged as an organized movement in 1996. The KLA has been accused of killing Kosovo Serbs and



Photo by Samuel Wallis, brigade engineer, 40th Infantry Division

**Proper drainage and a repaved road make it possible for children in Kololec, Kosovo to walk to school without wading through puddles of water.**

Albanians whom it accuses of collaborating with Serbian authorities.

In January of 2000, the former KLA was transformed into TMK, a civilian agency charged with providing emergency response and reconstruction services to Kosovo, according to the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. The TMK personnel realized they may still be viewed as KLA and the Serbian villagers may distrust them. But still they began working together on this project to benefit them all.

"Working together has eased the tension of the two," said Ervin.

And the villagers are grateful for all the team has done. Children no longer have to wade through ankle-deep water to get to school, said Ervin.

"We are appreciative of U.S. Kosovo Forces and TMK because they reconstructed the road," said Momir Gjeriq, a Kololec store owner.

This project proved that people, despite their past, can work together to make a difference.

"KFOR (Kosovo Forces) and local citizens working together can achieve a superb job. A multiethnic and multinational job that has now to be extended to other useful projects Kosovo-wide," said Lt. Gen. Yves de Kermabon, commander, Kosovo Forces at the project's ribbon cutting.

Another project the Kololec villagers are excited about is an asphalt road connecting Kololec to the larger city of Kamenica, said Ervin.

"Here is another opportunity to use our engineering skills to work with the other provincial organizations," he said.

Other opportunities for the engineers have included making road travel better and safer.

In this mountain region, the roads are typically narrow and filled with potholes. And many regions are connected by only one road traveled by auto, farm and pedestrian traffic.

One danger identified by the task force engineers is the possibility of rock slides from the

hills and cliffs these roads wind around. The problem isn't only on small roads, but also on the major routes through the region which are used by locals and the multinational forces.

That is why the task force engineers are trying to find a way to make transit through these areas safer.

"Since it's a peace keeping operation and not host nation building we can only do so much," said Ervin.

From the road, a cliff may appear to be sturdy, but looks can be deceiving. One cliff that appears solid may pose a

threat because it is comprised of shale and sedimentary rocks, which are frail, said Greg Taylor, environmental specialist, Europe District.

While the loose soil poses a landslide threat, it will make digging in the area much easier. The engineers are planning to excavate the area using machinery since this is a route used by KFOR personnel, said Ervin.

"Removal of it would be a preventative measure to make sure it wouldn't fall on anything or anyone," he said.

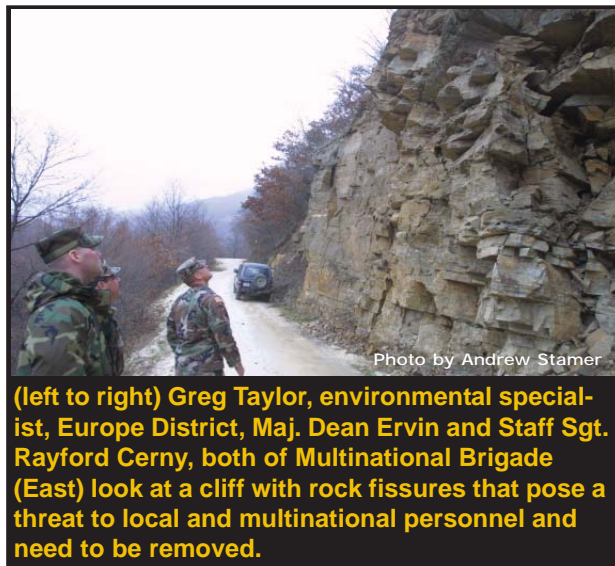
Rock removal may also have to be done in another spot. It is in a more dangerous location because the road is narrow and wraps tightly around the mountain with no guard rails to protect a vehicle from plummeting hundreds of feet.

On this cliff face the rock is much harder and contains large fissures, making it unpredictable to tell if and when it may fall. Because the rock is solid in this area, explosive charges may have to be used to clear the dangerous

outcroppings, said Ervin.

While there are a lot of opportunities to do humanitarian work outside the gates of Camp Bondsteel, only so much can be done, said Ervin. But the projects that have been completed have been successful. Not only because a problem was solved, but because multinational and ethnic gaps have been bridged.

(Learn more about the United Nations Kosovo missions by visiting [www.unmikonline.org](http://www.unmikonline.org))



**(left to right) Greg Taylor, environmental specialist, Europe District, Maj. Dean Ervin and Staff Sgt. Rayford Cerny, both of Multinational Brigade (East) look at a cliff with rock fissures that pose a threat to local and multinational personnel and need to be removed.**